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## Herculean storm stops company from producing

Thursday, September 23, 2004

By **ALYSSA YOUNG**  
The Express-Times

STOCKERTOWN -- Operations at Hercules Cement Co. have been suspended since Saturday morning, when 3 feet of water flooded the plant, Vice President of Operations Joe Pospisil said Wednesday.

It will take weeks and millions of dollars to fix the mess, but Pospisil said he hopes the plant will start running again next week.

In the meantime, employees are switching gears from their regular duties to concentrate on the cleanup.

Electrical problems are creating the biggest hurdle because the power lines that service Hercules are buried in conduits where the ground flooded, Pospisil said.

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Water also filled the lower part of the quarry, prohibiting any blasting until it dries out.

People driving through the plant to bypass the closed section of Route 191 to the west are disrupting operations even more, he said. He described the

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situation as dangerous because workers are maneuvering heavy equipment on the plant's roads.

Police are issuing tickets for trespassing when they catch motorists passing through.

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation expects Route 191 to have one lane in each direction open Friday.

The weekend flood also washed away the pipes and pumps that Hercules had been setting up for its stream-bed-lining project in the Bushkill Creek near the Norfolk Southern bridge.

The equipment, along with dams the company plans to build, will divert water from the first 550 feet of the stream bed to be lined.

Just downstream from Hercules, the southbound Route 33 bridge construction project experienced no storm-related setbacks, PennDOT spokesman Ronald Young Jr. said Wednesday. But people who live nearby along the Bushkill Creek have spotted new sinkholes since Saturday morning.

A gaping crater knocked down trees along the creek's bank near Route 33, and a sinkhole formed in the middle of the pavement approaching the fallen Bushkill Street bridge in Stockertown, resident Linda Iudicello said.

"The Bushkill (Creek) at this location was as wide as the Delaware," she said. "The force of this water was just ... it was scary. I have a whole new respect for Mother Nature at this stage of the game."

Across Route 191 from Hercules, Universal Forest Products lost inventory in the storm but resumed business as usual Monday morning, General Manager Greg Fribance said.

"We would consider our troubles fairly minor compared to theirs," Fribance said.

Fribance commended the company's employees for working over the weekend to remove bundles of lumber that washed into the street and to clear out stone and other debris.

"It was a pretty terrific sight, what you saw on the highway," Fribance said.

He said he still is assessing how much inventory was damaged in the flood.

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